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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000240

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SUBJECT: DIRECTOR'S MEETING WITH NEW TAIPEI MAYOR HAU
LONG-BIN

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Recently-elected Taipei Mayor Hau Long-bin intends to focus the first six months of his term demonstrating to the public that his administration is clean, competent, and committed to serving the public. Hau will concentrate on bread-and-butter issues, including the environment, public safety, and government transparency. Unlike his predecessor KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, Hau has distanced himself from "national" politics, and prefers low-key informality and hands-on management in contrast to Ma's more removed management and presidential-style formality. End summary.

¶2. (C) The Director met with Taipei Mayor Hau Long-bin on January 30 for the first time since Hau's December 25, 2006 inauguration as mayor. The Director complimented Hau for running a clean, effective campaign, and asked whether he had been surprised by the impressive showing made by his DPP opponent, former Premier Frank Hsieh (Chang-ting). Hau and newly-appointed Deputy Mayor Samuel Wu (Shiouh-guang) claimed they had expected Hsieh to perform well even though most polls suggested a poor DPP turnout. Hau explained that DPP voters, ashamed of President Chen's recent corruption scandals, were unwilling to admit their party loyalty to pollsters but turned out in force at the polls in support of the popular Hsieh. Hau remarked that former PFP Chairman James Soong's poor showing suggested that Taiwan was moving towards a two-party political system, and that the smaller parties' demise would be hastened by the single-member-district LY elections in December.

¶3. (C) Hau, who served as Environmental Protection Minister earlier in President Chen Shui-bian's administration, stated that cleaning up the polluted Danshui River would be a major focus of his mayoral administration. Since many of the worst polluters are located in Taipei County beyond his jurisdiction, Hau explained, a committee of Taipei city and county officials has been formed to jointly monitor river recovery efforts. Taipei County Magistrate Chou Hsi-wei is a close friend, Hau added, and since Chou faces re-election in three years, he too, is motivated to improve the river water quality. Although cooperation between Taipei city and county governments is very important, Hau remarked, it is "unrealistic" at this time to contemplate merging the two governments into one.

14. (C) Sensitized by the accounting scandal now vexing his mayoral predecessor KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, Hau told the Director that he and his administration have at most a six-month window to convince voters that they are clean, competent, and dedicated to serving the public interest. (Note: Hau spent the first month of his tenure visiting each of Taipei's districts, and has already implemented his "zero-tolerance" anti-corruption policy -- the city now has an Anti-Corruption Center to monitor municipal employees, and all city government department heads are required to place their assets into trust. End note.) Hau claimed that, to minimize traffic and business disruptions, he would personally work to ensure that all of Taipei's major construction projects are completed on time. Sticking to bread-and-butter issues, Hau added that he would pay special attention to improving public safety in Taipei city, since "that is always the most important issue for voters."

15. (C) Comment: Ma Ying-jeou saw the Taipei mayoralty as a stepping stone toward the presidency. During the last year and a half of his administration Ma served simultaneously as KMT Chairman, and during that time he focused much of his energy on KMT party matters, leaving the day-to-day management of city affairs to his deputies. In his dealings with AIT, Ma always conducted himself with the formality of a future presidential candidate, including meeting with the Director in a large formal meeting hall. In contrast, Hau Long-bin met with the Director in the privacy of his personal office and did not seem interested in national politics, or if he does have higher aspirations, he takes pains to conceal them. Instead, Hau has immersed himself in the city's daily affairs. Perhaps Hau's greatest strength is his conviction that he has only a short time to make a good first impression as mayor.

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16. (U) Bio Note on Hau Long-bin. Hau, the son of former Premier Hau Pei-tsun, a "mainlander" from Anhui Province, started his political career as a legislator in 1995. He withdrew from the KMT and joined the New Party in 1995, but returned to the KMT in January 2006. Hau has a BS in Agricultural Chemistry from the National Taiwan University and a Ph.D in Food Science and Technology from the University of Massachusetts.

YOUNG